SOUND TRANSIT

MOTION NO. M99-28

A motion of the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority identifying the route and station locations for the northern portion of the Tacoma Link light rail line and determining a construction schedule.

Background:

Tacoma Link light rail is one element of a ten-year, $3.9 billion (1995$) regional investment in high capacity transit. It will provide a fast, reliable, cost-effective transportation alternative connecting downtown Tacoma with the Tacoma Dome district and will serve major destinations along the route including the Theater District, the central business district, the Convention Center, the University of Washington's Tacoma Campus, and museums. Sound Move includes light rail service connecting downtown Tacoma with the regional transit terminal near the Tacoma Dome.

The light rail project corridor forms an "L" shape, extending west from the Tacoma Dome area on East 25th Street and then turning north at Pacific Avenue into downtown Tacoma. To facilitate study and to focus local discussion, the project was divided into two segments: east-west and north-south.

The Tacoma City Council adopted Substitute Resolution No. 34408 at its May 25, 1999 meeting supporting the Pacific to Commerce route for the northern portion of the light rail alignment in downtown Tacoma. That resolution includes the following language:

> "Whereas the City Council requests that the following commitments be integrated into the decision process for the Link line; and
>
> Whereas while the Sound Transit Board did adopt a Community Investment Fund for the Rainier Valley in Seattle, the circumstances surrounding the alignment in South Seattle are viewed as unique because of the federal funding involvement; and
>
> Whereas it is neither practical nor proper in the opinion of the Pierce County Delegates to apply a similar fund to the Tacoma alignment; and
>
> Whereas the City Council understands and agrees with the desire of the community representatives to address the concerns of local employment and training, streetscape impacts, and community accessibility; and
>
> Whereas resolving these issues requires the commitment of more than just Sound Transit as a lone agency; and
>
> Whereas a multi-tiered investment response is needed in response to the concerns and needs of and potential impacts on the Tacoma Empowerment Zone neighborhoods; and
>
> Whereas the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority Board, the staff of Sound Transit, and the City staff recommend that the preferred route for the northern half of Link be: the Pacific to Commerce route, which is a double track configuration on Pacific Avenue to South 17th Street, where it would turn up to Commerce Street to the last proposed station on the line located on the north side of South 9th Street"

On February 11, 1999, the Sound Transit Board identified the route for the east-west segment and the southern part of the north-south segment. This motion identifies the route and station locations for the northern portion of the Tacoma light rail line and determines the construction schedule.

Motion:

It is hereby moved by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority that:

A. The preferred route for the northern portion of Tacoma Link is the Pacific to Commerce route, which is a double track configuration on Pacific Avenue to South 17th Street, where it would turn up to Commerce Street to the last proposed station on the line located on the north side of South 9th Street, which is supported by the Tacoma City Council.

B. The construction of the Tacoma Link begin in Summer/Fall 2000 and be completed in Winter/Spring 2002, with revenue service beginning in Summer/Fall 2002, and with the goal of minimizing conflicts with the City of Tacoma and other public and private construction projects in downtown Tacoma.

C. The following program proposals be committed to by Sound Transit, the City of Tacoma, Pierce Transit, Tacoma Empowerment Consortium, and community organizations:

1. Sound Transit shall provide access to contracting, job training, and employment opportunities directed at enhancing and ensuring local employment. These programs shall include targeting outreach and recruitment within neighborhoods directly affected by Sound Transit construction impacts. Special emphasis shall be given to census tracts meeting federal guidelines for low-income neighborhoods. Sound Transit shall provide annual reports to the community reflecting the level of success in achieving significant local employment and contracting. The City shall participate through its Local Employment and Apprenticeship program and the Youth Building Tacoma program.

2. As an integral element of the construction of the Tacoma Link, Sound Transit shall complete streetscape and pedestrian access improvements along the entire Link corridor. These improvements shall be completed so as to mitigate traffic, noise, and business impacts and to integrate the light rail into the community.

3. With the selection of the Pacific to Commerce alignment in the northern segment of Downtown Tacoma, Sound Transit shall create a central plaza/park area surrounding the rail transition from Pacific Avenue to Commerce Street. The park shall be designed with the involvement of the community and shall maximize the available area for neighborhood use. The City shall, in the future, vacate all surrounding unused road right-of-ways for incorporations into the park.

4. Pierce Transit shall work with the City, Sound Transit, the Tacoma Empowerment Consortium, and the community to review the existing bus services connecting the Empowerment neighborhoods and the proposed Link alignment. Pierce Transit shall, as a part of the reallocation of Sound Transit displaced bus operating services, improve the direct connector services in these neighborhoods. Specifically, East/West service up and down the hill shall be enhanced.

5. To ensure improved neighborhood access and increased ridership, Sound Transit agrees to complete pedestrian streetscape improvements along the main East/West corridors serving the Link alignment. These improvements shall extend westward approximately one-half mile to serve the primary employment/residence areas. The corridors to be improved shall include South

11th, South 15th, and South 19th Streets. Sound Transit shall enlist the involvement and support of the City of Tacoma and the University of Washington in supplementing and expanding the available funds for improvements.

6. In order to maximize ridership and improve community accessibility to jobs, Sound Transit will improve the pedestrian connections between the Link station and the new Convention Center/Sheraton Hotel through construction of a mid-block stair climb. This stair climb shall connect the planned Convention Center Plaza on Broadway with the mid-point of the Link rail station on Commerce Street. The City shall explore opportunities for grant funding to enhance and expand the commitment of Sound Transit. The City agrees to work with the Empowerment Zone to identify opportunities for securing job and apprenticeship involvement in both the construction and the operation of the new Greater Tacoma Convention Center.

7. In order to maximize ridership and improve community accessibility to jobs, Sound Transit will improve the pedestrian connections between the Sounder and Link rail stations and the Tacoma Dome through construction of either new direct pedestrian walkways and/or improvement of the "D" Street corridor. Sound Transit will work with the City and the Tacoma Dome neighborhood association to identify the best investment. The City shall explore opportunities for grant funding to enhance and expand the commitment of Sound Transit.

ADOPTED by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority at a meeting thereof held on the 8th day of July 1999.

Paul E. Miller
Board Chair

ATTEST:

Marcia Walker
Board Administrator

SOUND TRANSIT

MOTION NO. M99-28

Identifying the route and station locations of the northern portion of the Tacoma Link light rail line and determining the construction schedule
BACKGROUND AND COMMENTS

Meeting:	Date:	Type of Action:	Staff Contact:	Phone:
Executive Committee	5/7/99	Deferred	Paul Bay	398-5134
Executive Committee	6/4/99	Recommend Board Approval	Sue Comis	398-5143
Board of Directors	7/8/99	Board Approval	Mary Jo Porter	398-5210

ACTION:

Approval of Motion No. M99-28 would identify the route and station locations of the northern portion of the Tacoma Link light rail line would determine the construction schedule.

BACKGROUND:

Tacoma Link light rail is one element of a ten-year, $3.9 billion (1995$) regional investment in high-capacity transit. It will provide a fast, reliable, cost-effective transportation alternative connecting downtown Tacoma with the Tacoma Dome district and will serve major destinations along the route including the Theater District, the central business district, the Convention Center, the University of Washington's Tacoma Campus, and museums. *Sound Move* includes light rail service connecting downtown Tacoma with the regional transit terminal near the Tacoma Dome.

The light rail project corridor forms an "L" shape, extending west from the Tacoma Dome area on East 25th Street and then turning north at Pacific Avenue into downtown Tacoma. To facilitate study and to focus local discussion, the project was divided into two segments: east-west and north-south. Three east-west alternatives and two north-south alternatives were studied in the final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Variations on these alternatives were also studied in the final EIS. The final EIS was published on January 21, 1999.

The east-west segment extends from the Tacoma Dome Station west to Pacific Avenue, serving the Tacoma Dome Station, Freighthouse Square, the planned Sounder commuter rail station, and the Tacoma Dome district. On February 11, 1999 the Board identified the route for this segment as a single track on East 25th Street.

The north-south segment begins at East 25th Street and continues north through the commercial core along Pacific Avenue or a combination of Pacific Avenue and Commerce Street. On February 11, 1999, the Board identified the southern portion of this segment as a single track on

Pacific from 25th Street to just south of the University/Museum station where it would branch to a double track.

The Board determined to study further two alternatives from that point north: the Pacific Avenue double track alternative and the Pacific to Commerce double track alternative. The Pacific Avenue route extends as a double track from South 21st Street and Pacific Avenue to the north end of downtown Tacoma terminating at a station just north of South 9th Street. The Pacific Avenue and Commerce Street route runs north on Pacific Avenue from South 21st Street and Pacific Avenue to South 17th Street where it crosses over to Commerce Street through the existing Chevron service station site. The route terminates at a station on Commerce Street north of South 9th Street.

Key advantages of the Pacific to Commerce double track are:

- Easier expansion to the Stadium District
- Fewer traffic impacts – The double-track-Pacific-no-parking option results in only one lane each direction at the 13th Street Station Area. The double-track-Pacific-with-parking option results in one lane each direction between 17th and 9th Streets. The EIS indicates that the traffic could be handled.
- Fewer parking impacts – The double-track-Pacific-no-parking option results in an additional 173 to 183 parking spaces removed as compared to the Pacific to Commerce route. The double-track-Pacific-with-parking option results in an additional 55 to 65 spaces removed.
- Convenient, obvious and level connections to bus service
- More centrally located in the downtown

Key advantages of the Pacific Avenue double track are:

- Prominent location on a desirable street
- More visible destinations
- Centralizes excitement and short-term economic potential on Tacoma's "Main Street"
- Easier expansion to the Thea Foss or Ruston Way waterfronts

A number of projects are planned for the coming five years in downtown Tacoma, including an expanded convention center and a new art museum. If construction of these projects and the light rail project are not coordinated, disruption may be greater and of a longer duration than if the various projects were dove-tailed. These projects will affect ridership also. The attached table details presently known estimates of opening dates of key projects.

On January 26, 1999, the Tacoma City Council passed a resolution that included direction to city staff to work with Sound Transit staff to evaluate the proposed construction schedule of the light rail project in light of the other projects proposed in the downtown area. That evaluation has been completed, resulting in a staff recommendation to begin revenue service in Summer/Fall 2002. The Tacoma City Council is expected to recommend a preferred route and construction schedule to Sound Transit on May 4 or at a later date.

Therefore, the motion adopts a construction schedule and opening date for Tacoma Link that coordinates with the opening dates for other projects slated for development in downtown Tacoma. By opening the Tacoma Link in summer/fall of year 2002, it will open simultaneous with or slightly after the other key projects.

A briefing book was provided to the Board in February, which provided the following information for the east-west and the north-south, segments and the operations and maintenance base sites:

- Introduction to Tacoma Link and alternatives description
- Map of route and station alternatives
- Major advantages and disadvantages of each alternative
- Public comments and responses
- Comparison of capital and operating costs
- Comparative evaluations of the route and operations and maintenance base site alternatives

The following information is provided to supplement the briefing book:

Utilities

The US West duct bank is located under two portions of the proposed light rail trackbed on Commerce Street. US West has indicated that relocation of its underground facilities would have a significant cost and schedule impact. Because of these comments, Sound Transit staff examined alternatives to relocation. Based on in-house analysis and on discussion with US West, Sound Transit engineers have identified a concept that leaves the facilities in place and protects the duct bank using cast-in-place concrete walls and cover slab. They have also proposed a method to provide access to manholes away from the trackbed. The field engineer for US West has verbally indicated that he supports this duct bank protection concept. Sound Transit has submitted a letter to US West requesting approval of the concept with the understanding that detailed calculations and design will be submitted for US West approval in the final design phase. Costs to protect the US West facilities in Commerce Street and the Tacoma Power underground facilities in Commerce Street (the only other facilities with potentially major impacts) are included in the current capital cost estimate. Such costs represent only 16 percent of the utility relocation allowance.

Based on this analysis, the impact to utilities does not appear to be a controlling factor in making the light rail routing decision.

Sidewalk Impacts

The light rail route on Pacific would necessitate reductions in the existing sidewalks in several locations. North of 17th Street sidewalk reductions are required if the route remains on Pacific, particularly for the option that includes two lanes of traffic each way and no parking. However, no sidewalk reductions are required for the portion of the route on Commerce. Notebooks containing hand-colored photographs have been prepared to illustrate the impacts to the sidewalks on Pacific.

Parking Garage Access

The light rail route on Commerce would result in very short delays to trains and busses during the peak period in the morning due to queues of vehicles waiting to enter the parking garages. (These brief queues already exist.) These delays would be up to 20 seconds in the northbound direction. Providing additional queue space inside the parking structures can almost eliminate delays. This can be accomplished by moving the gate/ticket island farther inside the garage entrances. If this project is felt to be desirable, the resulting garage space outside the gate could be used for monthly parking, reserved carpool/vanpool parking or redeveloped for retail use.

RELEVANT BOARD POLICIES AND PREVIOUS ACTIONS TAKEN:

- Adoption of *Sound Move,* the Ten-Year Regional Transit System Plan (May 31, 1996) *Sound Move* includes light rail service connecting downtown Tacoma with the regional transit terminal near the Tacoma Dome.

- Motion No. M98–48 (June 25, 1998)

  Motion No. M98–48 identified the most promising route alternatives to be studied in the Tacoma Link light rail draft EIS and in conceptual design.

- Adoption of Fiscal Year 1999 Budget (November 12, 1998)

  The 1999 budget includes funds for final design activities and the acquisition of rights of way. Funds for vehicle procurement were also included.

- Adoption of Implementation Guide (May 22, 1997)

  The Implementation Guide calls for Sound Transit to begin service on downtown Tacoma light rail service in the 2001–2003 period.

- Motion No. M99–5 (February 11, 1999)

  Motion No. M99–5 identified the preferred route for the east-west segment and the southern portion of the north-south segment.

KEY FEATURES:

- Identification of the route, station locations and construction schedule allows final design and right-of-way activities to proceed.

- The procurement of vehicles would be facilitated by the identification of the route.

FUNDING: Please note that all amounts are presented in 1995 dollars.

Sound Move included $65 million for the development of Tacoma Link and operations of the line from its opening through 2006. The current capital cost estimates for the two possible routes range from $54 to $55 million. Operating expenses are estimated to average approximately $3 million per year for each of years from 2002 to and including 2006. Thus, the estimates to develop and operate Tacoma Link total approximately $69 million to $70 million.

ALTERNATIVES:

Motion No. M99–5 identified the preferred route for the east-west segment and the southern portion of the north-south segment. At that time, the Board asked Sound Transit staff to analyze further the alternatives for the northern portion of the north-south segment. Such analysis has been performed and is summarized herein. The Board has two alternatives. One would be to select one of the two proposed alignments. The other would be to propose that staff study new segments and to delay the proposed actions until such study is completed.

CONSEQUENCES OF DELAY:

Delay of the route identification is delaying the execution of the final design contract. Negotiations for final design are on hold until the board selects the route.

LEGAL REVIEW:

The Legal Department has reviewed and approved the Background and Comments and the Motion.

Construction Projects in the Vicinity of the
Tacoma Link Light Rail Project
(as of March 1999)

Construction Project	Estimated Construction Period	Estimated Opening Date
Commuter Rail Seattle to Tacoma		December 1999
State Office Building		Early 2000
Philip Office Space	Summer 1999 - 2000	July 2000
Tacoma Dome Station Phase II		Fall 2000
Commuter Rail Tacoma to Lakewood		Summer 2001
Vacant Area Pacific to Commerce, 13th to 15th (Luzon Building, etc.)	2000	2001
Multiplex/Retail/Housing		Spring 2001
UW Tacoma, Phase IIA	September 1999 – September 2001	September 2001
Aquarium	If project is approved construction to start 2001	2002
International Glass Museum	July 1999 – March 2002	March 2002
Tacoma Art Museum	**First quarter 2000 – Second quarter 2002**	**Summer 2002**
Chihuly Bridge	Summer 1999 - 2002	July 2002
Convention Center	**August 1999 – October 2002**	**Summer/Fall 2002**
UW Tacoma, Phase IIB	Summer 2001 – Summer 2003	Summer 2003
Train to the Mountain	Improvements on existing freight operations to generate revenue to fund this project.	2004